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DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
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FROM : AmEmbassy SAIGON

DATE: July 11, 1966

SUBJECT : Constituent Assembly Elections

REF :

b-1 ed

No enclosures found with this airgram

This airgram transmits documents prepared by the Embassy in connection with the election of a Constituent Assembly to be held on September 11,1966.

They are:

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1) Guidance to Provincial Teams, a paper setting forth specific reporting requirements that have been levied upon the province team in each province and, where applicable, in the autonomous cities. The paper also lists a number of subjects for spot reporting by the province teams. The paper has three supplements: a brief summary of the electoral law; an election calendar; and a list showing the number of seats allotted to each election district.

2) Political Profiles, for each of the 43 provinces and the six autonomous cities, plus one on the former province of Phuoc Thanh, which elected a Provincial Council on May 30, 1965 but was abolished the following month. The "profile" lists basic facts about the province (population, communications, political and other organizations), lists the results of the 1965 provincial/municipal council elections, and on the basis of those results and subsequent information attempts to identify likely candidates and probable trends in the Constituent Assembly election. The "index of voter cohesion" at the bottom of page one was devised by Professor John P. Roche, of Brandeis University who recently visited Viet-Nam as a USAID consultant, and provides some measure of the degree of organization of the various political groupings. In the case of a province with a high index (e.g., Quang Tri), one concludes that a substantial and disciplined minority (in the example, the Institute Buddhists) voted en bloc for a full field of candidates (9 in Quang Tri and that the field of candidates was probably small). A low index (e.g., Gia Dinh) may reflect a

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multiplicity of candidates (52 for 15 seats in Gia Dinh) or a tendency by voters to choose only those candidates they know personally (perhaps five or six in a field of fifty-two in Gia Dinh). The major deficiency of the index - as its author acknowledges - is that in its computation no allowance was made for the number of unsuccessful candidates (these numbers were not readily available). Thus, in Gia Dinh there were 52 candidates for 15 seats, a ratio of approximately 3.5:1, whereas in Go Cong there were only 9 for 6 seats, or 1.5:1.

Preliminary Conclusions on the Basis of "Profiles". Few educated prognostications about the outcome of the Constituent Assembly election can be drawn until the names and affiliations of the candidates are known later this month. The situation is particularly confused in I Corps, where Buddhist Institute participation in the election is most doubtful and where some potential candidates will not venture to run (or will be disqualified) because of their having participated in the anti-GVN "struggle movement" of March-June. Nevertheless, the Vietnamese Nationalist Party (VNQDD) stands to win at least 5 or 6 of the 9 seats allotted to Quang Ngai, Quang Tin, and Quang Nam - or about one-third of the 17 of allotted to the area.

In II Corps, with 20 seats, there are probable Catholic seats in the Highlands (e.g., Kontum and Lam Dong) and others in the Lowlands that are apt to be won by Buddhists who are more responsive to the moderate faction of the Buddhist Institute than to its extremist wing (e.g., in Binh Dinh, Phu Yen, Khanh Hoa, Binh Thuan). Many of the other winners may be respectable citizens (often former civil servants) of the type who won election to provincial councils last year and who at present have no particular alliance to any party or grouping (e.g., councils elected last year in Ninh Thuan, Phu Bon or Dar Lac). Dalat city and Tuyen Duc in particular may draw numbers of non-resident candidates. (Most of the eight Montagnard seats and the one Cham seat will also go to II Corps.) Of the 15 seats in III Corps, the two in Tay Minh will surely go to members of the Cao Dai sect and several others to Northern Catholic refugees (Long Khanh, Binh Tuy, Phuoc Long, perhaps 2 of th 3 in Bien Hoa). In other provinces, particularly those closer to Saigon, no clear trend was apparent last year and no prediction is yet possible.

In the Capital Military District (Saigon-Gia Dinh), with 26 seats, only a few personalities can be identified as certain or likely winners. They include Dr. Phan Quang Dan in Gia Dinh and La Manh Nghe in the capital. Much will depend on the attractiveness of the slates such "old pols" put together and on the size of the field in each district. Five Chinese will be elected from Saigon's District 5 (Cholon).

The one sure in IV Corps, with 30 seats, is the Hoa Hao. They have recently claimed they will elect only 8 or 9 deputies, rather than the 15-17 they might have elected, "in order to give other groups a chance". In fact, proportional representation may prevent a Hoa Hao sweep to equal last year's, but the sect can probably elect at least 3 candidates in An Giang, 2 in Chau Doc, 1 in Kien Phong and 2 in Vinh Long. They could conceivably do better in these provinces (which have 12 Vietnamese seats) and might elect

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a candidate in Dinh Tuong and even in Chuong Thien. Nowhere else in the Delta are there clear prospects. For the four Cambodian seats (one each in Vinh Binh, Ba Xuyen, Chau Doc and Kien Giang) only one definite candidate has been identified: Thach Sung, who has represented Cambodian interests in the whole series of consultative bodies (currently in the People's-Army Congress). He may run in Vinh Binh or in Ba Xuyen.

Statistics on Voters. At the time of provincial and municipal council elections last year the Ministry of the Interior claimed 9,408,305 people under government control. There were 4,693,371 persons registered, and 3,466,525 voted (73.86%). The Ministry's estimates for 1966 are as follows:

	Total Population	Under GVN Control	Number of Voters to be Registered
12/31/65	14,570,039	10,510,620	5,091,843
6/30/66	15,106,685	not given	5,122,301

As the Embassy has commented previously, the Ministry's estimates of the numbers under GVN control appear far too high, but its estimates of the electorate are much more plausible. It seems reasonable to anticipate a registration total approaching 5 million and a total number of voters ranging between 3.75 and 4 million.

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Enclosures: As stated

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